DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 304 194 JC 890 118

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TITLE Student Success through Leadership.
PUB DATE Feb 89
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Student Success Strategies Conference (Portland, OR, February 8-10, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; Extracurricular Activities; *Leadership Training; *Student Development; *Student Government; *Student Leadership; Student Participation; Student Recruitment; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS *Wenatchee Valley College WA

ABSTRACT

Wenatchee Valley College's (WVC's) student leadership development program has been successful in identifying and developing people to perform leadership roles within the campus community. Rather than waiting for student leaders to emerge on their own, the program actively recruits high caliber people into WVC's student activity program. At campus recruitment functions and orientations, trained student leaders present information to high school juniors and seniors and entering WVC students on the leadership curriculum and the goals and objectives of the college. These student leaders are also involved in presenting a three-county workshop for junior high school leaders. The leadership development program includes the following components: (1) a retreat program for students and faculty that focuses on leadership skills and the development of close interpersonal relationships; (2) a credit-course in student government/applied leadership, which explores basic theoretical concepts and practical techniques; (3) inclusion of student leadership in the administrative structure of the college, with students taking responsibility for the research and study necessary to make informed contributions to administrative committees; and (4) campus clubs and organizations. WVC's student services team and staff members involved in student activities work with instructional faculty to provide students with these creative leadership activities. (AAC)

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STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH LEADERSHIP

A PRESENTATION

by

WENATCHEE VALLEY COLLEGE

Don Schoening, Ed. D.
Carole Keane

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Student Success Strategies
Portland, Oregon
1989

JC 890 118

STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Wenatchee Valley College, Student Services

By Don Schoening, Ed. D., and Carole Keane

Fortunately, at Wenatchee Valley College, those people who either worked directly with or were in a position to influence the development of a leadership program had the same realization. That realization was if a student activity program were to make any significant progress, the students themselves were going to have to implement that progress. The old adage, "not much can be done with student leadership in a two year setting" had to be overcome. Wenatchee Valley College responded to that problem by focusing attention on a process of leadership development which could provide adequate mobilization of student resources within a two year period. The more involved we became with our program, the more convinced we were that the basis for a successful student development program needs to be formulated around a sound leadership structure instituted by the college on a meaningful and lasting basis.

In the following remarks, we will mention some programs that we think were conducive to appropriate learning situations surrounding the

leadership program at Wenatchee Valley College. Our hope is that these suggestions or guidelines will stimulate others to look beyond the suggestions made here to those approaches identified in other community colleges. The one major ingredient of our student development program is that of developing capable people who can perform a leadership role in relevant situations within the campus community.

Identification of Potential Leaders

For some time, community colleges have been satisfied with simply waiting until talent emerges from the rank and file who attend the institution. Our approach has been to coordinate a search for potential people who can profit from involvement. This technique, although generally accepted in fields such as music, drama and athletics, is still not totally accepted by activity people. If you adopt a wait and see philosophy, chances are your leadership program will remain ineffective and not have the impact on the institution that it could have. Leadership in itself is a very comprehensive field of specialization, so we feel completely justified in searching for high quality people.

At Wenatchee Valley College, we have utilized a program for the active recruitment of leaders. An active leader recruitment program conducted by our own trained leaders accomplishes two major objectives:

(1) it allows our present leaders to apply their leadership skills, and (2) it recruits good, high caliber people into our activity program. In fact, most of our programs are carried out by utilizing our present leaders in some practical extension of our leadership program.

Community colleges have a similar day when all high school seniors or high school juniors come on the campus to look over the facilities and to begin to analyze the particular course offerings that are available at that particular college. During this time, the activity advisor should have a well-designed program, using student leaders who are presently on campus, to present the leadership curriculum and the goals and objectives of the college so that they can be clearly identified by interested students in the field of leadership. The advisor's role involves setting up the structure and putting into motion and creating a situation where student leaders can explain their programs. Attempts should be made to get a cross-sectional group of students from representative areas in the service area. Personal contact with the student who has gone to a particular high school seems to be an invaluable incentive for a student to become involved. Personalizing the leadership situation creates an awareness that each person is a potential leader when he or she comes to the community college.

At Wenatchee Valley College, our student leaders utilize their skills in presenting a three county leadership training workshop for junior high/middle school student leaders. Counselors and principals attend the workshop with selected leaders from the service areas within the college district. These workshops build strong rapport with our public school students and staff, provide a role model for junior high/middle school students, and create bonding between younger student leaders and Wenatchee Valley College.

A video presentation can be an invaluable tool in the recruitment of potential leaders. The presentation should be put together by students and be student oriented. The presentation should be candid and frank and show students in action in leadership roles across a wide spectrum of the campus. A special attempt should be made by the advisor to include a number of students who are from diverse groups from outlying service areas within the college district. When the presentation is given to student council groups or high school and adult community groups, they can personalize or identify with the people who are in the leadership roles at the college, realizing that leadership at the college is representing the entire service area. Diversity becomes more significant when a large city is the center of the community college area. Unfortunately, potential

leaders in outlying smaller cities can develop feelings that the college is not designed and built for them but rather for the large urban areas that immediately surround the community college.

Another outstanding approach to the recruitment of high school leaders is the summer orientation program, whether it be held on a five-day basis, a one-day basis, or an extended period of time. The intent is to bring high school seniors from the service area. Many of those students are not necessarily going to attend the community college but are interested in leadership. This lends itself to the idea that the community college is the center of leadership for its service area and is not just concerned with those people who are going to attend that institution. The community college becomes the focal point for leadership, and not necessarily always involved in simply selfish recruitment of students. The summer orientation leadership program becomes a recruitment device for leaders in our society and culture. The summer orientation program should include speakers of national consequence on current issues and should be well organized and designed to stimulate people to consider the comprehensive area of two- or four-year college and national leadership.

An invaluable recruiting resource has been the student officers who feel their experience in our leadership program has been rewarding and

educational. Through their enthusiastic expression of their experiences to others, incoming students have been encouraged to become involved in our program.

Another major source of possible student leaders is through the vocational and academic clubs and organizations on campus. Students from diverse age groups, returning student populations, and vocational programs are introduced to the leadership program through retreats and individual and group contact by our student services staff.

These are some of the approaches that we have used at Wenatchee Valley College in identifying and drawing to our college those talented, capable people that are necessary for the growth and vitality of any organization.

The Leadership Program in Operation

If you are fortunate enough to either recruit good student leaders or if they are spontaneously available, the institution is still responsible for the actual program within which those potential leaders can function. At Wenatchee Valley College, we have identified a number of both structured and unstructured experiences that we feel make a person a better leader.

Leadership Retreats

Wenatchee Valley College has a two year retreat program. Our retreat program has been developed using sites that are not only scenic, but are also in close proximity to the college.

In the fall, a one day retreat is planned. The retreat is designed to focus on leadership skills for student leaders to utilize throughout the academic year. The current year's senate officers and club representatives attend the retreat. Senate members are instrumental in formulating the final plans for determining the topic and location for the retreat. The fall retreat is a major factor in setting the tone for our leadership program for the year. Through their involvement in the retreat, students begin to develop a greater understanding of the knowledge needed to prepare them to become more effective in their leadership roles.

All of the students who have filed for offices or have indicated a desire to function in some leadership structure for the following year are encouraged to attend our spring retreat. At our spring retreat each year, the president, vice president for student services, and other key administrative staff members have attended and participated on an equal basis with the students. We have used a variety of techniques, all of which have met with some degree of success. Probably the most

meaningful part of any retreat is the close interpersonal relationships that develop.

Without going into great depth, the following considerations are taken into account in planning our retreats. It seems best to move the people involved to an environment where outside distractions and day-to-day living cannot interfere with the intensive pursuit of knowledge that should be gained in the leadership program. The tone must be set for the leadership program or retreat early in the inception of the program. Continuity is a basic concept that leads to success in the retreat. If the college is able to organize a series of retreats, then basic leadership factors can be analyzed throughout a two year period, leading to a more complete background of leadership.

We utilize our outgoing student leaders to design our spring retreats. The design is usually based largely on the experience and training they felt was most beneficial and productive to them. This transition period is a time where experienced, trained leaders convey their knowledge and expertise to the incoming leaders to promote continuity and a smooth transition from one year to the next.

The next step is for the nucleus of outgoing leaders to form a program committee to develop a theme for our retreat. The program

committee develops the organizational theme of the retreat, inasmuch as speakers will be sought to fulfill areas of need. The committee should carefully list all materials to be taken to the entire retreat, whether it be a one, two, or a five day retreat. Various committee chairmen are selected for their ability to contribute specifically in their areas of leadership. Since the retreat requires an extended period of time, some thought should be given to providing entertainment or special events which promote group cohesion.

Student Government

Probably no one program in the entire community college environment generates more interest or concern than does student government. Operation of the student government should be a vital, relevant learning experience, and it can be if the institution allows a framework for self-governance where students can and do make relevant decisions concerning their own destiny.

Notice carefully that we continually emphasize the leadership process. Student government is simply one of the facets of our leadership program. Student government at Wenatchee Valley College has been one of our applied psychology courses for which students receive credit.

An executive meeting to determine the agenda, prior to the actual student council or student senate or whatever government structure exists, is imperative. The executives must plan the meeting in advance so that relevant business can be carried out. This, then, facilitates the proper reporting of the information that has occurred at the meeting so that the total student body is involved. Every attempt should be made by the student body administration to bring into the meeting circle people who are involved in campus wide programs. Progress reports on happenings on campus come from students who are not necessarily in the student council structure. Our student senate encourages the attendance of members of the student body at large who are concerned about campus issues. If student government never has any outside visitors or influences put upon it by the student body in general, it should begin to question its function and its role in the college. As there is lobbying in state legislative structures and national legislative structures, so should there logically follow lobbying by special interest groups who attend the student council or student senate.

Every effort should be made by the activities director or coordinator to include the student leadership in the administrative structure of the college. Most higher education administrators are very

receptive to the addition of students to the committee structure and the administrative structure of the institution. The simple inclusion of the student in the administrative structure, however, is a very minor portion of the responsibility which should be placed on the shoulders of the activities director or coordinator. At Wenatchee Valley College, we consider it a responsibility to develop the type of leader who can contribute and communicate effectively the ideas of the student body as a whole. A student leader must not necessarily react to each small special interest group, but be aware of the college's goals and philosophy and be able to contribute relevant ideas towards the progress of the college in reaching those objectives or goals. If the student is not able to communicate or engage in effective dialogue within the administrative structure, the administrative staff begins to feel that student leaders are not valuable contributing members, but merely a necessary evil. A key responsibility of the activities director or coordinator is to provide those types of experiences which lead to effective study and the understanding of the needs of the institution.

Let's take some specific examples: The student who attends the curriculum council or the curriculum committee, which is responsible for the development of the integrated curriculum on campus, is responsible

for a careful study of innovative and unique curriculums that exist around the nation or internationally. This student is charged with a special responsibility and a good deal of study and further reading and research into what is and should be effective curriculum for the community college. The student who is placed on the student services committee, or student services structure, should begin to study the fields within the student services umbrella. He or she must become familiar with student services administration if he or she is going to become a vital, contributing member. In other words, the student leader can promote student welfare by careful study of the field which he or she provides input. At Wenatchee Valley College, we evaluate the success of our student government on two criteria: success and learning experience. We point with pride to an almost unbelievably small turnover in the government structure. Perhaps this occurs because of our preparation of students for the leadership role.

One of our most successful endeavors in terms of concrete improvement has been the organization and development of our applied leadership class. The class provided us with an intensive platform from which to allow our people to really develop their individual leadership style.

This course explores with the students the basic concepts of leadership, along with the principles and the actual application of the techniques of leadership. The student is exposed to sensitivity situations in the mechanics of being in and leading groups of various classifications. Intensive theory in the application of the psychological scientific method toward understanding group behavior is a major factor in the class. The following is a short outline of some of the material covered in the course:

I. Theory and Instruction in:

- A. The Basic Approaches to Leadership
- B. Creativity in Leadership
  - 1. Brainstorming
  - 2. Research
  - 3. Implementation
- C. Groups in our Society
  - 1. Psychological Aspects of Groups
  - 2. Formation of Groups
  - 3. Membership Roles in our Society
  - 4. Members Needs in our Society
- D. Determinance of Leadership
  - 1. Personality

2. Intelligence

3. Acceptance

E. Communication in Groups

1. Barriers

2. Methods

3. Objectives

F. Leadership Delegation

G. Leadership Authority

H. Psychological Pressures of Leadership

1. Pressure - Reaction to Feelings of Others

2. Acceptance and Use of Constructive Criticism

3. Manipulation by Authority Figures

4. Responsibility to Minority Groups

5. Responsibility to Majority Groups

Clubs and Organizations

Since our focus in the student development program is one of providing the experiential field for the practical application of leadership, clubs and organizations play an important part. The key to success in club and organization programming is stimulation and motivation. The contribution that our clubs and organizations make to the program

depends largely on the organizational skills that we, the students and the staff, can jointly provide for each other. All of our clubs are encouraged to develop leaders to seek state or national office. Students cannot make much of a contribution to a college, state, or national leadership opportunity unless the institution is willing to make available time, money, and resource people to provide the necessary information he or she needs.

Practical Application

As we have become aware of the direction of our leadership program, it becomes natural to begin to think of using any situation as an opportunity to explore with our students how this particular problem or concern can relate to leadership. Most of us will be unable to avoid having the need to control at least a portion of our own destiny which is, in a limited sense, leadership--but at any rate, without going into a deep philosophical discussion, most of us will, as a father, mother, church member or employee, be faced with a potential leadership situation. How well we handle that situation could depend on how well we are prepared for a practical solution.

At Wenatchee Valley College, we try to encourage a style of leadership that encourages involvement. If the students are apathetic,

often leadership patterns are responsible, and we can begin to chip away at that apathy. If a group of students have a particular need, perhaps student government can adapt a leadership style which could facilitate the meeting of that need. Once in a while, the following question is directed toward us, "If you encourage all of your students to become leaders, who follows?" The answer to that question is simple. Obviously all of the students in our program do not become leaders in all situations. Most psychologists will agree, however, that good leaders also make good followers. We feel that our leadership program is an on-going, self-perpetuating program which will pay benefits for many, many years to follow.

Staffing

Since the major ingredients of our student development program center around leadership, which hopefully stimulates involvement, we include not only our activities staff, but our entire student services team in our leadership program. The student services team encourages students to become involved with our leadership program. The Wenatchee Valley College student services staff has been able to join forces with our instructional faculty in a synergetic process, working together in a parallel approach to provide students with creative leadership opportunities.

When we begin a job search for prospective student services staff members, leadership qualities become a criteria for selection. The student services family then comes to promote student leadership as an essential component of the community college experience.

Our leadership program would probably not be overly successful without the support of the hundreds of students who have been through our program. They are our best supporters and continue to provide us with more potential leaders. Aside from the many signs of personal recognition that we receive, the product sells itself. The students themselves feel they have profited.

In summary, we have tried to elaborate on the philosophy of our student program centering on leadership. The several methods that we have used to identify potential leaders have been briefly outlined. We have covered several of the leadership experiences that we have designed for our students at Wenatchee Valley College. Hopefully, some of the ideas and concepts can be assimilated along with your own approaches to student leadership to promote state and national excellence in community college student leadership programs.

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